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SUBJECT: KANDAHAR: A SNAPSHOT OF ELECTIONS ACTIVITY IN AN ACTIVE PROVINCE

¶1. The first political rally of the campaign season took place in Kandahar city on June 18, with an estimated 1000 members of the Barakzai tribe holding a rally downtown in support of incumbent Hamid Karzai. The rally was entirely peaceful and apparently not organized by the Karzai campaign machine. The Barakzais, one of the more important tribes in Kandahar Province, have generally been aligned with Hamid Karzai's half-brother, Ahmad Wali Karzai (AWK), the powerful chairman of the PC, so their support for Karzai is not surprising.

¶2. AWK is reportedly spending time in Dubai in connection with his mother's medical treatment there. According to Karzai family sources with close connections to ISAF, AWK plans to keep a low profile during the campaign season so as not to draw criticism for trying to dominate campaign activities in the province in favor of Hamid Karzai -- which he would be capable of doing if he so chose.

¶3. The young nephews of AWK and Hamid Karzai, "Zach" and "Ace" Karzai (both U.S. citizens from Downers Grove, Illinois) still plan to manage the Hamid Karzai campaign in Kandahar. They have said they will make extensive use of spam SMS messaging. PRT rep confirmed that on June 17, he received two Karzai political ads in Pashto on his cell phone. Zach and Ace, like AWK, have said they want to keep the Karzai campaign in Kandahar "low key."

¶4. Kandahar City Mayor Ghulam Haider Hamedi Mohammedzai met with many PC candidates last week and explained regulations he plans to enforce regarding political advertising and rallies in Kandahar City. He covered how to apply for permits for rallies, how to work with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to ensure that events are peaceful, and where political advertising may be displayed.

¶5. Many campaign posters for Ashraf Ghani are up in Kandahar City, as well as a few for Karzai, and even fewer for other candidates. Most Karzai advertising has been in the form of new, large posters attached to Afghan National Police (ANP) vehicles (not just the small windshield portraits these vehicles generally display). After Canadian and U.S. police mentors suggested to Provincial Chief of Police BG Matiullah that political advertising by the ANP violates campaign laws, the posters appear to be coming off the ANP vehicles.

¶6. Three international UNDP-Elect officials moved into accommodations at the KPRT Camp Nathan Smith (CNS) on June 21. Canadian leadership helped get the UNDP up and running in Kandahar, after the UNDP had argued that its personnel would not be active in Kandahar without a secure place to reside and work. The Canadians also wanted to be close to UNDP in order to make it easier to get information about the elections.

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